

# Meet the Director: Ryan

**R**yan Broddrick, a 20-year DFG employee, took the helm in January, 2004 after a 3-year absence from the department. In a candid interview, Broddrick shares his vision for the future of the DFG.

*What brought you back to the Department of Fish and Game?*

I came back because there was plenty of opportunity for additional conservation, including restoring and protecting the lands we currently manage. The Department has made some dramatic improvements over the last 20 years – improvements that will outlive multiple generations. By building on those improvements, we can provide additional habitat and opportunities for recreation, and continue to preserve a slice of California's natural and very diverse wildlife, fisheries and habitat landscape.

*What are the top issues facing the Department right now?*

Our number one challenge is properly managing the habitat that the DFG has acquired over the last 50 years. Because our acreage is limited, we have to get the highest productivity that we can out of the lands we have. Our productivity is challenged by everything from invasive species to water shortages. We have to be more scientific about how we create habitat, and that's not an area that we've identified to the public as a crying need. But that's really critical for our lands, for the Department of Fish and Game to be considered an excellent steward of the land, and have those lands functional for future generations.

The second challenge is to once again evaluate and prioritize all the things the Department does, instead of trying to serve so many masters in so many ways. We need to explain to the public what we do, and listen to make sure that what we're doing is relevant to their interests, needs and values. That's a real challenge in that we have to educate the public about what we do, we have to explain how intense our stewardship activities are, and we have to explain the relationship between the public's activities, wildlife, and the habitat upon which wildlife depends.

*What is your toughest challenge as DFG Director?*

Probably one of the most difficult challenges for a director of Fish and Game is to find ways to integrate across department lines and societal demands. For hunting and fishing and wildlife interests to be well-served, the Department has to be engaged with everything from transportation to water supply and conveyance, to minimize harm and to optimize opportunity. If we try to do Fish and Game's activities in isolation, we won't be relevant as time goes by. We'll have conflicts with land use planning, and we'll have conflicts where water supply has been allocated without consideration of the public trust needs of fish and game resources.

*What role can hunters and anglers play in carrying out DFG's role?*

The traditional role of the hunter and angler has been literally the first conservation investor, and that conservation investment has provided huge dividends. But I think with the continued urbaniza-

tion of California, the demands that are placed on California mean the hunter and angler can play a broader role in helping us communicate the value of wildlife and habitat to the general public. I don't expect that we'll ever be able to recruit hunters and anglers at a rate consistent with population growth – that's not the answer to maintaining the role for the hunters and fishermen of California. They're going to have to help us convince the 85 percent who don't hunt and don't fish that the hunting/fishing community is a critical component of maintaining wildlife resources.

The other issue for hunters is that North America has a game management system that is the best in the world. And it works. Hunting has always been a way in which to harvest, but it also has been one of the predominant tools of the North American wildlife management strategy. And that strategy has worked better than any other in the world. We have demonstrated over and over again that a strategy of regulated hunting provides a harvestable surplus of game, while maintaining abundant populations of game species.

*Some say hunters and anglers are paying more for licenses to fish and hunt, but are getting less service and fewer opportunities.*

They are paying higher costs today than they did 20 or 30 years ago. But compared to other expenses in California, if you look at the cost of housing, transportation, or water, hunting and fishing licenses in California are a tremendous value. So, are hunters and anglers paying more and getting less? That's a judgment for them to

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make in terms of their personal experience. But I think it has to be put into context. And if they're honest with themselves, they'll admit that \$32.80 for a fishing license is still a good value – probably undervalued when you look at the costs we incur to provide these opportunities.

*What is the DFG's plan to deal with wild turkeys in California?*

There is no single solution. You can't trap turkeys and relocate them unless you have a place to relocate them to, and the staffing to do it. Turkey trapping is labor intensive and it only addresses a symptom of a larger problem, but it's something you would have to commit to long-term. I guess the toolbox for dealing with nuisance turkeys is: 1) educating the public so they don't provide an attraction, 2) if we're going to have relocation of turkeys, it has to be supported financially, and 3) helping the public make a distinction between turkeys that are simply a nuisance and those that are damaging property or crops.

*How do you feel about the criticism that the Department is focusing less on hunters/anglers and more on legislative mandates?*

It is real, but when I look at all the things the Department does, it shouldn't be a contest between one division and another. There's no reason why we can't merge all of the Department's objectives. When I look at a wildlife area that's enjoyed by both consumptive and non-consumptive users, those areas provide a huge mosaic of habitats – as much or more diversity of habitats than areas we have identi-

fied as ecological reserves [many of which are closed to hunting]. The distinction is that wildlife areas are pretty intensely managed. Some wildlife areas are designed to replicate the historic flooding to support the fall flight of water-dependent species. But there are literally hundreds of resident species of birds and mammals. To me, part of the half-million acres that DFG owns across the state is providing diversity across the spectrum of wildlife, and where it has recreational activities associated with hunting, that's great. We need to convince our customers, those who hunt and those who don't, that we manage landscapes, and the by-products of those landscapes benefit all Californians, including hunters and anglers.

*Do you support "bird seed" taxes or other fees for non-consumptive users?*

When you look at the diversity of what the Department does, everything from reports of mountain lions, to working with landowners to develop habitat on small parcels, to our general law enforcement activities, we have to find a way to have a broader income stream than just hunting and fishing licenses, which are only about 20 percent of our total budget. But it has to be a broad-based fee for activities that really reflect the efforts of Fish & Game and maintaining public trust resources. Whether it's reviewing an environmental document or a stream crossing, we've taken this



*DFG Director Ryan Broddrick with hunting companions Bogie and Amber.*

approach that we'll put a fee on the actual activity. Well, the activities for which we collect fees are just a small slice of the activities that we're actually involved in. So we're constantly in a situation where our programs are driven by legislative mandates and fees are not adequate to the task at hand. The public's not going to be willing to pay that fee unless they can see a product they can relate to.

*How do you spend your spare time?*

I find a lot of tranquility in the wilds: the marshes and riparian areas of the Central Valley; the ocean to me is a constant fascination, both on top of it and underneath it. I think the common thread between both of those areas is that you have a chance to immerse yourself and look at the diversity of habitats. It just shows you that in a state of 36 million people, we still have some incredibly wild places. That's what inspires me to come back to work. What can we contribute incrementally so that these places are healthier, and they're available for future generations? I try to do most of those activities in the companionship of good friends and a hunting dog.